THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF TEXTILES (SHRI GINGEE N. RAMACHANDRAN): (a) No, Sir. The exports of cotton handloom fabrics and made-ups have registered an increase of 27.52% in rupees terms and 25.66% in US dollar terms during the year 2002-03 as compared to the exports during the year 2001-02.

(b) A target of US$ 575 Million has been fixed for the current year 2003-04.

(c) During the year 2002-03, the quantum of exports of cotton handloom fabrics and made-ups had been of the order of 1371.41 lakh kg and the amount earned was Rs. 2633.27 Crore (US$ 544 Million).

(d) Does not arise.

Unhealthy working conditions

933. SHRI RUMANDLA RAAMACHANDRAYYA: Will the Minister of TEXTILES be pleased to state:

(a) whether women workers in textile and food processing industries are being discriminated with stagnant wage rates and unhealthy working conditions; and

(b) the measures proposed to import training to women to upgrade their skills to enable them adapt to changing modernisation technology to avoid gender discrimination?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF TEXTILES (SHRI GINGEE N. RAMACHANDRAN): (a) No, Sir. The Minimum Wages Act, 1948 provides for fixation of minimum wages for different categories of workers, and their periodical revision by the respective State Governments.The Equal Remuneration Act, 1976 provides for equal remuneration for men and women workers. The Acts do not make any distinction on the basis of sex. The Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act, 1970 and the Rules framed thereunder provide for various welfare and health measures for such workers.

(b) The training programmes for textile workers meant for upgradation of skill are provided according to the specific area/sector where skill upgradation can lead to higher income making ability and the training programmes do not discriminate on gender basis.

Women are encouraged to get training in Food Processing & Training Centres (FPTCs) with a view to upgrading skills and instil confidence in them to engage themselves profitably in food processing industries.

Effect of WTO ruling against EU

934. SHRI ASHWANI KUMAR: Will the Minister of TEXTILES be pleased to state:

(a) whether a recent WTO Ruling against EU's provision of Trade preferences (Drug Window) will positively impact on export of Indian Textiles *vis-a-vis* Pakistan;

(b) what steps, if any, have been taken to ensure the cost and quality competitions of Indian textiles as compared with Chinese and Bangladesh exports;

(c) what specific measures, if any, have been taken or contemplated by the Government to increase the global market share for Indian sellers; and

(d) whether Government proposes to make legislative changes with respect to the various statutory enactments that regulate silk and textiles industries in India?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF TEXTILES (SHRI GINGEE N. RAMACHANDRAN): (a) Yes, Sir. However, the ruling is yet to be adopted by the Dispute Settlement Body.

(b) and (c) Government has been taking a number of steps to ensure cost and quality competitiveness of Indian's textile products and to increase their global market share. Some of the important initiatives taken are:

(i) The Government has de-reserved the woven segment of readymade garment from the SSI sector. It has also raised the SSI investment limit for knitted segment to Rs. 5 crores.

(ii) The Technology Upgradation Fund Scheme (TUFS) has been made operational from 1-4-1999 to facilitate the modernisation and upgradation of the sector.

(iii) Weaving, processing and garment machinery, which are covered under TUFS, have been extended the facility of accelerated